



Emergency Medical Services (EMS) responds to many cold weather emergencies each winter. You can reduce your risk of sustaining a cold weather emergency by taking a few precautions. Dress by wearing warm, insulating layers close to the body covered with wind and waterproof layers on the exterior- and don't forget a toque! Carry an emergency road side kit in your vehicle containing extra clothing, blankets, and emergency supplies and ensure your cell phone is fully charged.

## Frostnip

- Frost-nipped skin is extremely cold, but not yet frozen;
- It commonly affects the ears, nose, cheeks, fingers and toes;
- The skin may look red and possibly feel numb to the touch;
- When treated promptly, frostnip usually heals without complication;
- Move to a warm environment and immediately, but gently, re-warm the affected area through skin to skin contact (i.e. hand covering tips of ears).

## Frostbite

- Frostbite occurs when skin becomes so cold, the skin and underlying tissues freeze;
- Affected skin may look white and waxy and will feel hard to the touch;
- Move to a warm environment immediately and place the affected area in warm, *not hot*, water, until fully re-warmed;
- Seek further medical attention as required.

## Hypothermia

- Hypothermia is abnormally low body temperature, less than 34°C (as compared to normal body temperature of about 37°C);
- Early hypothermia may manifest as profound shivering; moderate hypothermic patients may act inappropriately: stumbling, mumbling, and fumbling, as their body temperature continues to drop resulting in severe hypothermia (<30°C);
- Left untreated, severe hypothermia may progress to unconsciousness or death;
- Early recognition and prompt medical attention is key. Don't forget to protect yourself from the factors that originally lead to the patient's situation;
- Initiate gentle re-warming as quickly as possible. Remove any wet or constrictive clothing; cover with blankets, or sleeping bags. Protect from further heat loss: eliminate contact with cold surfaces, and shield from wind and moisture.